

PINEDALE ANTICLINE NATURAL GAS EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Sublette County, Wyoming

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

[X] Draft
[] Final

Lead Agency:

U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

Cooperating Agencies:

U.S. Department of the Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
State of Wyoming

Counties That Could Be Directly Affected:

Sublette County, Wyoming

Abstract:

The Draft EIS analyzes a proposal by the Pinedale Anticline operators to drill new exploration and development wells in their leased acreage within the Pinedale Anticline Project Area (PAPA) (approximately 197,345 acres) in western Wyoming. The PAPA operators include Alpine Gas Company, Anschutz Exploration Corporation, B-P Amoco Production Company, HS Resources, Inc., McMurtry Oil Company, Questar Exploration & Production, Ultra Resources, Inc., Yates Petroleum Corporation, Western Gas Resources, Inc., Jonah Gas Gathering Company, and other companies (collectively referred to as the PAPA Operators). Lands associated with the new drilling program are located from the town of Pinedale, Wyoming south (25 to 30 miles) to the Jonah Natural Gas Field, west to the Green River, and east to Wyoming Highway 191.

The PAPA is located within Townships 29 through 33 North, Ranges 107 through 110 West, 6th Principal Meridian. The area is accessed by U.S. Highway 191 and Wyoming Highway 351. Access to the interior of the PAPA analysis area is provided by an existing county and BLM road network developed to service homes and ranches located along the Green and New Fork Rivers, livestock operations, recreation use, and prior and on-going drilling and production activities.

Collectively, the Pinedale Anticline Operators' proposal would provide for the continued exploration for natural gas and, where discoveries occur, the development of the gas resource by drilling up to 900 new wells to achieve 700 producing locations over the next 10 to 15 years. Drilling estimates were based on the operators, BLM, and State of Wyoming reasonable expectations that the "tight-gas" formation in this area could be developed at a spacing of one well every 40 acres or 16 wells per square mile. The DEIS analysis addresses 3 critical criteria bearing on how and to what extent development in the PAPA could proceed. The criteria include - 3 *exploration/development scenarios* which define over what portion of the PAPA (none, all or just a portion) development could occur; 2 *levels of development* which define the number of well pads which could be developed in the next 10 to 15 years; and 2 *mitigation alternatives* which define options for reducing impacts to the environment from future development activities. Mitigation alternatives are evaluated based on their application on

just Federal lands and minerals as well as on all lands and minerals in the PAPA (federal, state and private).

The Pinedale Anticline Operators' plans and drilling schedules would be contingent upon an adequate price for the gas at the wellhead and anticipated increases in gas consumption in the United States (increase 40 percent by 2015 according to the American Gas Association). The Draft EIS describes the physical, biological, cultural, historic, and socioeconomic resources in and surrounding the project area. The focus for impact analysis was based upon resource issues and concerns identified during an extensive public scoping process. Potential impacts of concern from development, not in priority order, are to sensitive view sheds; Pinedale and surrounding communities economic, social, health and safety effects; livestock operations; recreation use associated with the Mesa; crucial big game winter range and antelope migrations; sage grouse and raptor breeding and nesting; special status plant and wildlife species; soil erosion and sediment increases to the New Fork and Green Rivers; groundwater draw down and contamination; Historic Lander Trail condition and viewshed; and cumulative effects.

Other Environmental Review or Consultation Requirements:

This Draft EIS, in compliance with Section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (as amended), includes the Biological Assessment for the purpose of identifying any endangered or threatened species which are likely to be affected by the proposed action.

Lead Agency Contact:

For further information, contact Bill McMahan at the Rock Springs Field Office, (307) 352-0224.

Comments on this Draft EIS should be submitted in writing to:

Bureau of Land Management
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Anticipated Date of EPA Notice of Availability Published in Federal Register: November 26, 1999.

**Date By Which Comments Must Be Received by the BLM At the Above Address: 60 Days
Following Publication of the EPA Notice of Availability in the Federal Register.**